Section 12: Overview:

Google algos you should know about, algo being short for algorithms. In this section of the course, I'm going to go through the biggest three algos that you should know about, the first being Google Panda, the second Google Penguin, and the third Google Hummingbird. All of these Google algorithms had a massive impact on the Google search results. So without further ado, let's dive into the first video of this section, which is all about Google Panda.

Section 12: Google Panda:

Algorithms are complex systems that Google uses to retrieve data from its search index and instantly deliver the best results for a query. The search engine uses a combination of algorithms and numerous ranking signals to deliver web pages ranked by relevance in its search engine results page, also known as SERPs for short. In its early years, Google only made a handful of updates to its algorithm. Now Google makes thousands of changes every single year. Most of these updates are so slight that they go completely unnoticed. However, on occasion, the search engine rolls out major algo updates, which significantly impact the search engine results page. One of those big updates was Google Panda. Google Panda was initially released on the 23rd of February, 2011. The stated purpose of the Google Panda algorithm, our date was to reward high-quality websites and diminished the presence of low-quality websites in Google's organic search engine results.

According to Google, Panda's initial rollout over the course of several months affected up to 12% of English language search results. Triggers for Panda; the Panda algorithm update addressed a number of problematic things in Google search engine results, including thin content, so weak pages with very little relevant content on them. Duplicate content; so copied content that appears on the internet in more than one place. Low-quality content; so pages that provide little value to human readers because they lack in-depth information. Lack of authority/trustworthiness, low-quality user-generated content; so UGC. High ad-to-content ratio; so pages made up mostly from paid advertisements rather than original content. Website blocked by users, and content mismatching the search query. So pages that promise to deliver relevant answers if clicked in the search results, but then when they do get clicked they fail to do so.

For example, a website might have a page title, coupons for Whole Foods, but then when it's clicked, you land on a page that has no coupons whatsoever. Panda had a massive effect on sites like this. So how do you know if you've been hit by Google Panda? One signal of potential Panda penalization is a sudden drop in your website's organic traffic or search engine rankings correlating with a known date of algorithm update. As you know, Panda was released on February 23rd, 2011, you can easily log into your Google analytics account and see if you had any big drastic traffic drops around this time, as shown in the screenshot below.

So if you have been hit by Google Panda, I guess you're probably wondering how you can recover from Panda? So recovering from Panda is pretty straightforward, as we know the main

triggers it targeted, which was thin content, duplicate content, low-quality content and so on, and so on. So to recover, you simply need to ensure your website does not fall into any of these categories, which could have triggered it to tank in the first place. So make sure your website has no thin content, no duplicate content, no low-quality content and so on, and so on. In summary, Google Panda was a massive algo update, and in my opinion, it made the internet a much better place and I think you would agree too, as no one likes to see thin content or duplicate content on page one on Google.

Section 12: Google Penguin:

Google Penguin. Google Penguin was released on the 24th of April 2012. Following on the heels of Panda, the Penguin update was announced by Google as a new effort to reward high-quality websites and diminish the search engine results page presence of websites they engaged in manipulative link schemes and keyword stuffing.

The initial rollout of Penguin impacted 3.1% of English language search engine queries between 2012 and 2016. The filter went through 10 documented updates evolving over time and influencing the SEO community understanding of the problematic practices Penguin sought to address. As of early 2017, Penguin is now part of Google's core algorithm.

So Penguin triggers. Penguin targeted two specific practices. The first is link schemes, which is basically the acquisition or purchase of backlinks from low quality or unrelated websites, creating an artificial picture of popularity and relevance in an attempt to manipulate Google and give the site higher rankings. For example, an insurance company in London could fill the internet forums with spam comments linking to itself as the best insurance company in London. Falsely inflating its appearance or relevance with these unnatural links. Or the same company might pay to have links reading, "Best insurance company in London", appear on unrelated third party articles about dog grooming, content that has no relation to the topic whatsoever.

The second thing Penguin addressed was keyword stuffing, which is populating a webpage with a large number of keywords, and constantly repeating that keyword in their content in an attempt to manipulate the rankings for that webpage. For example, if you own an insurance company in London, what people used to do back in the day was literally put the keyword on the page a hundred times, so insurance company, London, insurance company, London. As a result, the content never read naturally at all. However, the webpage ended up ranking really highly as Google thought this page was the most relevant to this keyword, as this website mentioned that keyword the most times.

And what Google Penguin did was come in and fix that. So if you've been hit by a Google Penguin, how can you recover? It's the same process as figuring out if you've been hit by any Google algo update. You simply need to match up any traffic drops with the date the algorithm was released. With this one, you need to be a little bit more careful and ensure your traffic drop did indeed drop from the update, and not because you received the unnatural links manual penalty from Google, which is a completely different thing to algo penalty.

Manual penalties are manual actions by Google. Algo penalties are when your site tanks because of an algorithm update. So, if you had been hit by Google Penguin recovery is pretty straightforward. Like any Google algo update to recover, you simply need to ensure you are not implementing what the algo was attended to go after. For example, participating in link schemes and keyword stuffing. Do bear in mind you can accumulate a list of toxic backlinks for negative SEO attacks, which, if you have them, then you want to disavow them and follow the steps I showed you in a negative SEO section of the course.

Additionally, Google staff, John Mueller, called Penguin a site-wide algorithm. Meaning that the presence of a large number of low-quality links pointing to one page on your site could result in a reduction of Google's trust in your entire site, which makes it even more important to ensure you're building high-quality backlinks to your website. If you follow the techniques I've taught you in the link building section of this course, then Penguin shouldn't be an issue for you.

Section 12: Google Hummingbird:

Hummingbird had an estimated release date of 20 August 2013. Unlike the previous Panda and Penguin updates which were initially released as add-ons to Google's algorithm, Hummingbird has been cited as a complete overhaul of the core algorithm. While it's believed that many preexisting components or the core algorithm remain intact, Hummingbird signals Google's commitment to an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the intent of searcher's queries with the goal of matching them to more relevant results.

Google announced Hummingbird on September 26, 2013, but it actually already been in place about a month prior. Whereas previous algo updates such as Panda and Penguin sparked significant reporting of lost traffic and rankings. Hummingbird on the other hand, did not appear to have drastic negative impacts on the general web. It was largely understood as having a positive influence on the accuracy of Google's knowledge base known as the Knowledge Graph.

In order to fully understand the purpose behind Hummingbird, it's important to first be familiar with the search engine feature it most heavily impacted, which was a semantic search and the Knowledge Graph. A year prior to the release of Hummingbird, Google launched its own Knowledge Graph. Not an actual graph, but rather a set of search features designed to provide quick and accurate answers to users without having to click onto actual websites, like the one you are seeing below.

Prior to the roll out of Google Hummingbird, for the search below, I would have been presented with a set containing links and numerous pages, which I probably could have learned the answer for myself. Prior to the roll out of Google Hummingbird, for the search of "rules of football", Google would have presented me with a set containing links to numerous pages through which I could have probably learned the answer. Google realized this was slow and often an irritating process, even for users who are presented with relevant results.

Google Hummingbird makes search quicker, easier, and more intuitive. So as you can see from the screenshot, I typed in "rules or football", and instead of Google give me 10 different websites, it gave me the little feature snippet, also known as a Knowledge Graph, at the top of the page on Google. From this knowledge graph, I can see the rules of football or soccer if you're in America very easily and conveniently. This is much more intuitive than having 10 different links, clicking over to each website, and figuring out the rules of football, as per my example in this screenshot.

So how does Google determine that these results reflect the intent of the searcher and adequately address their needs? This is where Semantic Search comes in. At the heart of Hummingbird, lies an all-important concept of semantics or meaning. Even the fanciest computers aren't the cleverest. This is because although it's easy for humans to distinguish between two different, yet similar concepts, by virtue or context, computers can't do this unless they're explicitly told.

Semantic Search is the concept of improving search results by focusing on user intent, and how the subject of the search relates to the information in a wider sense or its contextual relevance. In a nutshell, essentially Semantic Search focuses on determining what a user really means rather than a string of keywords and then serving relevant results. For example, if a user performs a search for the term "weather", it's much more likely that they are looking for a forecast in the local area, not an explanation on the science behind the weather.

So in this example, weather is a subject of the search. The desire for a local forecast is a user's intent. The difference between a weather's forecast and an explanation is in the concept's context. So how can you optimize for Hummingbird? Optimizing pages for Hummingbird is really simple. All you have to do is create great content that your audience wants and finds useful, and also enriches the overall experience. You should probably be doing the following anyway, but if you're not, now is an excellent time to start and make your website Hummingbird friendly.

To give you some actionable steps, here's three things you can do. The first is diversify the length of your content. We know that long-form content can work exceptionally well as part of a wider content strategy, but if every single post you publish on your website is a 5,000-word monster article, you may not be meeting your reader's needs. For this reason, and to get something done rather than write a mammoth blog post, mix up the length of your content. Add shorter articles among longer ones, and don't be too pedantic when it comes to word count. Remember, there is no perfect post length, only the length an article needs to be.

Second, use topic appropriate language. Something that sites first take advantage of is using industry appropriate language in their content. This is something done out of fear of alienating potential readers who may not be familiar with a certain topic or area. However, writing content that includes appropriate terminology, can demonstrate to Google that your site is authoritative and valuable.

Number three, implement schema microdata. Implementing schema microdata can only be a good thing, especially with Hummingbird's heightened focus around semantics. As we discussed in a technical SEO section of the course, schema makes it easy for Google to understand what your website is all about, making it more likely for Hummingbird to place your content in searches for wider categories.

Implementing schema can be a bit of a pain, but it could be worthwhile in the long run. In addition to making a site friendlier to the search engines, you're also providing Google with an opportunity to get your website featured as a Google snippet, or in the Knowledge Graph.